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A-8 * MONDAY, AUGUST 7, 1961

Gagging the Military

This story begins with a confidential or "private" memorandum sent by Senator Fulbright to the White House and the Defense Department—and then leaked to sympathetic members of the press. Its apparent purpose was to curb participation by military officers in privately-sponsored seminars designed to "alert" the American people to the threat of communism. This curbing effort seems to have met with some success, which is hardly surprising in view of Senator Fulbright's influential position as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee.

One unanticipated result, however, has been the lighting of a vigorous backfire by Senator Strom Thurmond, Democrat of South Carolina. Somehow, he got hold of a copy of the memorandum, which Senator Fulbright had not made available to his Senate colleagues. Thus armed, the South Carolinian proceeded to read the riot act to his fellow Democrat.

The memorandum, he said, is part of a concerted attack against the anti-Communist indoctrination of the American people and our troops—an attack which was initiated by the Communist Party of the United States. Then

training his fire more directly on the Senator from Arkansas, Mr. Thurmond added: "The implication of this document goes far beyond a mere attack on our military leaders; it constitutes a clandestine assault on the fundamental foundations of our Republic. It is a smear campaign utilizing innuendo based on unsubstantiated allegations."

Senator Fulbright, after several days of silence, replied last Wednesday. Professing surprise at the Thurmond reaction, he said the memorandum was personal in nature and based on his "strong belief in the principle of military subordination to civilian control." He also indicated that he would have given Senator Thurmond the memorandum if the latter had not confronted him with an "ultimatum" demanding a copy "within the next hour." However, he added, in view of the controversy he was submitting the memo for inclusion in the Congressional Record.

As with most such things, the Fulbright memorandum can be read differently by different people. It will mean one thing to one person; something else to another.

For our part, we do not think it can possibly be read to mean that Senator Fulbright is engaged in any assault, clandestine or otherwise, on the foundations of the Republic. It is quite obvious that he is disturbed by what he considers to be improper military activity. At the same time, it is equally obvious, so it seems to us, that the memorandum relies to some extent on innuendo, suggestion, and what used to be called guilt-by-association to support a generalized and unwarranted indictment of military participation in the indoctrination sessions. With the notable exception of one rear admiral, the memorandum attributes no specific abuse to a particular military man. The specific complaints lie against private individuals. Still, the memorandum says this: "There are many indications that the philosophy of the indoctrination programs is representative of a substantial element of military thought, and has great appeal to the military mind." As a generality this sounds rather ominous. But what, exactly, does it mean?

Senator Thurmond is strongly urging that the Senate Armed Services Committee investigate the use of military personnel and facilities to arouse the public to "the menace of the cold war." Presumably he thinks such an investigation would give the indoctrination programs a clean bill of health. We doubt, however, that the committee will want to undertake an inquiry which, in effect, would be an investigation of Senator Fulbright. At the same time, we think the Defense Department should move with great care in

acting on the Fulbright memorandum. No doubt there have been abuses, and they should be corrected. But these seminars, and certainly this is true of those that we have observed, are not aimed at subverting civil authority. Their real purpose is to stimulate public interest in reinforcing national security. This is a job that needs to be done, and military people, if not gagged, can play a most useful part in getting it done.

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